

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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CONGRESS BLOCKS BUSH ADMINISTRATION EFFORT TO KILL HOMELAND SECURITY PREPARATION PROGRAM

Markey, Appropriations Committees Affirm Strong Support for Local First Responders

WASHINGTON, DC - Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), Senior Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security and the Energy and Commerce Committee today released the following statement on the decision by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to deny a Bush Administration request to eliminate a key homeland security program that prepares cities to respond to terrorist WMD attacks.

Rep. Markey said "I am pleased that Congress has thwarted the Bush Administration attempt to eliminate the only Federal program that coordinates local first responders to deal with terrorist WMD attacks. This decision means that 125 municipal areas in 43 states, including Boston, Springfield and Worcester, can continue for at least this year to maintain a high level of coordinated preparedness should terrorists strike."

"Dirty bombs and other terrorist WMD attacks are a serious danger to our cities," continued Rep. Markey. "We know that al Qaeda is trying to obtain dirty bomb materials in North America; terrorists have already struck with anthrax; and Osama bin Laden has said that getting nuclear weapons is a religious duty. If a terrorist group attacks an American city with nuclear, radiological, biological or chemical weapons, there could be thousands of casualties, and in the first 24 hours after the incident, the only people on hand to help will be local first responders."

The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) was established in the wake of the terrorist release of sarin nerve gas in a Tokyo subway in 1995. The program provides funds to municipal authorities to coordinate local first responders in reacting to terrorist WMD events, including biological, chemical and radiological (dirty bomb) attacks. On March 19 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) privately instructed MMRS to spend 80% of its FY2004 funding on other unrelated activities. In a March 29 letter Rep. Markey reminded Secretary Ridge that by law, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees must be notified 15 days in advance of any significant reprogramming of these funds. In response, DHS Under Secretary Janet Hale sent a reprogramming request letter to the Committees on April 29. On May 18 and 19, the House and Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittees sent letters to Under Secretary Hale and Secretary Ridge denying the reprogramming request.

MMRS provides funds to the following municipal areas: Anchorage, Albuquerque, Austin, Akron, Anaheim, Arlington, Aurora, Amarillo, Atlanta Regional Coalition, Baltimore, Boston, Birmingham, Buffalo, Baton Rouge, Bakersfield, Chicago, Columbus, Charlotte, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Corpus Christi, Colorado Springs, Columbus (GA), Chattanooga, Columbia, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Dayton, Des Moines, El Paso, Fort Worth, Fresno, Fremont, Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Wayne, Garland, Glendale (CA), Grand Rapids, Greensboro, Hampton Roads (Newport News, Chesapeake) Area, Hartford, Huntsville, Honolulu, Houston, Hampton Roads (Virginia Beach) Area, Hampton Roads (Norfolk) Area, Hialeah, Huntington Beach, Indianapolis, Irving, Jefferson Parish, Jacksonville, Jersey City, Jackson, Kansas City, Knoxville, Lincoln, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Las Vegas, Lexington-Fayette, Louisville, Little Rock, Lubbock, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Madison, Mobile, Montgomery, Mesa, Modesto, Northern New England Region (New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont), New York, Nashville, New Orleans, Newark, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Omaha, Orlando, Providence, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Portland (OR), Riverside, Rochester, Raleigh, Richmond (VA), Sacramento, Salt Lake City, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, Santa Ana, St. Petersburg, Shreveport, Spokane, Stockton, Southern Rio Grande Region (TX), Southeast Alaska Region, San Bernardino, Springfield, Syracuse, Tucson, Tulsa, Twin Cities (Minneapolis), Tampa, Toledo, Twin Cities (St. Paul), Tacoma, Warren, Worcester, Wichita, Washington DC, Yonkers.

Additional information is available at Rep. Markey's website,
<http://www.house.gov/markey>.

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